

5th Relay for Life set for Fairgrounds this weekend

By Tabitha Wells - The fifth annual Dufferin Relay for Life event will take place at the Orangeville Agricultural Society fairgrounds starting tomorrow night (Friday), to raise money and support for local cancer patients and survivors.

The Relay, which runs for 12 hours overnight, is a non-competitive event that brings together the community to celebrate life and fight cancer.

‘Each year we have about 50 teams with ten people on their team, so usually around 500 participants,’ explained Brenda Seltzer, Chair for the Survivor Dinner committee. ‘They come out at around four in the afternoon to start setting up their tents all around the track, so it becomes like tent city.’

The event also includes the participation of local restaurants who work together to provide meals throughout the night for the survivors and other participants at the event.

‘The community has totally embraced it, we get lots of restaurants that want to participate and almost too much food to feed 500 participants, but sharing across lots of the residents has been great,’ said Ms. Seltzer.

The main purpose of the event is to celebrate the survivors and life and to bring hope and encouragement to those who are still fighting against cancer. The evening begins with an opening ceremony, followed by a survivor walk around the track with all the participants cheering them on.

The survivors, according to Ms. Seltzer, include anyone past or present facing cancer, whether they were just diagnosed and are waiting for treatment, undergoing treatment or have already won their battle.

‘I think some people get turned away by the term ‘cancer survivor’ because they feel that they’re not really a survivor if they are just doing treatment or if they underwent it a long time ago,’ said Ms. Seltzer. ‘But whether they were diagnosed yesterday or ten years ago, they are still a survivor and we would like them to participate, celebrate and bring hope with the rest of us.’

Later in the evening, at dusk, the participants, survivors and their families gather for a luminary ceremony. Candles are placed in fire-retardant bags called luminaries, lit up, and placed around the track during the ceremony.

‘Each candle represents a fighter, a survivor or is placed in memory of someone who lost their battle,’ explained Ms. Seltzer. ‘The candles are lit and remain there the rest of the night to light up the track as the relay continues until morning.’

The event will also include entertainment throughout the night.

‘We call it the biggest un-slugger party of the year,’ said Ms. Seltzer.

This year, the local fundraising goal is \$120,000, which would bring the money back into the community to provide financial support for drivers who help get patients in Dufferin to appointments and Hospice Dufferin, who focus on assisting those struggling with cancer or with recovering their lives after cancer.

‘What I really like about the Relay for Life is that 100% of the money raised within Dufferin County goes back to our community,’ said Ms. Seltzer. ‘A lot of the time when you raise money it goes directly to research, and we do that too but a lot of the funds raised go right back to Dufferin County.’

As of Wednesday morning, they had reached 42 per cent of their goal and raised \$50,309.16 towards the Canadian Cancer Society. Donations can be made at the event itself, or by visiting the Canadian Cancer Society website at www.convio.cancer.ca and selecting the Relay for Life category, then Dufferin County.

?We'd really like to encourage everyone to just come out, enjoy some dinner if they want to contribute, or to check out the relay,?
said Ms. Seltzer.

Sponsors for the Relay include the Agricultural Society, local Lions and Rotary clubs, Orangeville Citizen, 2 for 1 Pizza, Dairy Queen Grill & Chill, Pita Pit and Boston Pizza.